

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 17537 061637Z

42

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 TRSE-00 /069 W

----- 015306

R 061215Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9860

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 17537

FOLLOWING TEL CALCUTTA 3015 DTD 06 DEC 76 SENT ACTION NEW DELHI
INFO BOMBAY MADRAS BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 3015

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS IN WEST BENGAL POLITICS

1. CHIEF MINISTER RAY, WHO HAS ENJOYED THE SUPPORT OF THE CPI AND THE LEFT WING OF THE WEST BENGAL CONGRESS UNDER P.R. DAS MUNSHI FROM THE START OF HIS STRUGGLE TO RETAIN OFFICE, HAS NOW GOTTEN ENDORSEMENT BY L.K. BOSE, PRESIDENT OF THE NLCC AND LEADER OF ONE OF THE CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS OF THE STATE CONGRESS. BOSE AND DAS MUNSHI ISSUED A STATEMENT ON DECEMBER 5 ANNOUNCING THAT THEY HAD "BURIED THEIR DIFFERENCES AND COME TOGETHER FOR JOINT CAMPAIGNS WHICH HAVE BECOME NECESSARY IN VIEW OF THE CRITICAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE STATE." BOSE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT "ON THE PLEA OF WORKING FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES, A PARTICULAR GROUP HAS BEEN CAUSING HARM TO THE STATE AND THE RULING PARTY..." BOSE AND DAS MUNSHI HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WILL HOLD A JOINT MEETING IN CALCUTTA ON DECEMBER 6 AT WHICH THEY WILL (IN BOSE'S WORDS) "TELL THE PEOPLE THAT WHAT THE STATE NEEDS MOST IS VIGOROUS, UNITED EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE 20 POINT PROGRAMME RATHER THAN ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES."

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NEW DE 17537 061637Z

2. UNTIL RECENTLY BOSE AND DAS MUNSHI WERE BITTER ENEMIES, DENOUNCING EACH OTHER IN WEST BENGAL CONGRESS COUNCILS AND FIGHTING IT OUT IN STREET GANG WARFARE; SOME SIX MONTHS AGO SEVERAL OF BOSE'S FOLLOWERS WERE KILLED IN A FACTORY BRAWL WITH LEFT WING CONGRESS UNIONISTS. BOSE, HOWEVER, HAS A DEEP PERSONAL ANIMUS AGAINST SANJAY GANDHI - FOR REASONS TOO COMPLEX AND OBSCURE TO ALLOW ADEQUATE EXPLANATION - AND IT IS THIS, APPARENTLY, THAT HAS BROUGHT HIM INTO ALLIANCE WITH DAS MUNSHI IN SUPPORT OF CHIEF MINISTER RAY. THE MOVE TO OUST RAY IS VIEWED BY MANY BENGALIS AS SANJAY GANDHI'S DOING, AND AS SUCH IT IS RESENTED. LK. BOSE'S COMING TOGETHER WITH P.R. DAS MUNSHI COULD FORM THE BASIS - SO THE TWO REPORTEDLY HOPE - FOR A BROADER STOP SANJAY MOVEMENT IN THE WEST BENGAL CONGRESS. IN FACT FOR SOME WEST BENGAL CONGRESSMEN "STOP SANJAY" IS THE RALLYING CRY JUST NOW. GOWB MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOOD PRAFULLA KANTI GHOSH, ANOTHER CONGRESS CONVERSATIVE WHO REPORTEDLY HAS NO LOVE FOR SANJAY, IS KEEPING GROUNDS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE BLOCS OPPOSING AND BACKING RAY, AND THERE ARE RUMORS THAT WEST BENGAL CONGRESS PRESIDENT ARUN MOITRA MAY DEFECT FROM THE ANTI-RAY CAMP. IF THESE TWO WERE TO COME ACROSS TO RAY'S SIDE, THE BALANCE IN THE WEST BENGAL CONGRESS WOULD SHIFT IN HIS FAVOR.

3. RAY HAS CONDUCTED HIMSELF VERY ASTUTELY IN ALL THIS. PRESUMABLY HE HAS PRIVATELY SIGNALLED HIS FOLLOWERS BUT PUBLICLY HE HAS AVOIDED ANY ASSOCIATION WITH THE MOVEMENT TO KEEP HIMSELF IN OFFICE. HE HAS MAINTAINED A VERY UNCHARACTERISTIC PUBLIC STANCE OF TOTAL HUMILITY, NEITHER ATTACKING HIS DETRACTORS NOR ENCOURAGING HIS SUPPORTERS. IN THOSE FEW PUBLIC STATEMENTS HE HAS MADE HE HAS PROFESSED ONLY THE DESIRE TO SERVE THE PUBLIC GOOD. THIS MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR RAY'S OPPONENTS TO ACCUSE HIM OF TRYING TO DIVIDE THE PARTY OR OF GIVING SUPPORT TO PARTICULAR GROUPS (I.E. THE SIN OF "GROUPISM" THAT MRS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 17537 061637Z

GANDHI DENOUNCED RECENTLY IN GAUHATI).

4. CHIEF SECRETARY GUPTA TOLD ME, IN A BRIEF CHAT AT A SOCIAL FUNCTION EVENING DECEMBER 5, THAT RUMORS ABOUT RAY'S IMPENDING DEPARTURE WERE UNFOUNDED AND THAT THE CHIEF MINISTER WOULD BE STAYING ON. GUPTA SAID RAY HAS THE SUPPORT OF A MAJORITY OF THE STATE'S MLAS, AND HE PREDICTED THAT AGITATION OVER THIS

ISSUE WOULD SOON SUBSIDE. GUPTA, OF COURSE, IS RAY'S APPOINTEE AND WOULD BE EXPECTED TO PUT UP A GOOD FRONT FOR HIM, SO WHAT HE SAYS ON THIS PARTICULAR SUBJECT MAY OR MAY NOT BE MEANINGFUL. ALMOST ALL OTHERS I SPOKE WITH AT SEVERAL SOCIAL EVENTS OVER THE WEEKEND THOUGHT RAY'S DEPARTURE INEVITABLE AND EXPECTED IT SOON. ALL THE BUSINESSMEN - SOME HALF DIZEN - EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE GROWING POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN THE STATE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY. SOME BLAMED SANJAY AND HIS MAN KAMAL NATH FOR HEAVY HANDEDNESS AND BUMBLING. OTHERS THOUGHT RAY SHOULD HAVE STEPPED ASIDE SOME TIME BACK. BUT ALL FEARED THAT THE FIGHTING INSIDE THE STATE CONGRESS PARTY AND THE CPI'S APPARENT DECISION TO AGITATE COULD CAUSE LABOR TO GET OUT OF HAND AND MAKE REVIVAL OF THE STATE'S STAGNANT ECONOMY EVEN MORE DIFFICULT - AND MORE UNLIKELY.

KORN
UNQTE SCHNEIDER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL LEADERS, PARTY DISSENSION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NEWDE17537
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760450-0822
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761269/aaaaciaw.tel
Line Count: 134
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <12 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS IN WEST BENGAL POLITICS
TAGS: PINT, IN, (GANDHI, SANJAY), (BOSE, L K)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006